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RUEHGB/AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD 0305
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RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO 0311
RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS 0517
RUEHDO/AMEMBASSY DOHA 0265
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C O N F I D E N T I A L TOKYO 001445

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR NEA/ELA IRWIN AND EUR/ERA GIAUQUE

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SUBJECT: JAPAN'S VIEWS ON LEBANON SITUATION

REF: STATE 52061

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Joe Donovan for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Japan is closely following the situation in Lebanon and on May 27, MOFA's spokesperson issued a statement of support following the election of President Suleiman. However, Japan is not likely to make statements critical of Iran or Syria at this time. Likewise, Japan is hesitant to formally classify Hizbollah as a terrorist organization, either fully or partially, until a majority of G-8 countries do so. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) Talking points and background information contained in reftel were shared with Japan's Special Envoy for Middle East Peace Ambassador Tatsuo Arima by Deputy Chief of Mission May 23, and separately by Political Officer with MOFA First Middle East Division Principal Deputy Director Akihiro Tsuji. Arima told DCM Japan is closely following the situation in Lebanon and is anxious to signal its strong support for Prime Minister Siniora's government. He recalled that Siniora had twice been scheduled to visit Tokyo but had to postpone his trips at the last moment due to political turmoil and violence in Beirut. He lamented the fact that Japan had therefore missed out on an opportunity to very publicly bolster Siniora and his government.

¶3. (U) Following the election of General Michel Suleiman as President, on May 27 MOFA issued a statement welcoming his election as an important step towards the stability of Lebanon. The statement also expressed appreciation for the countries involved in brokering the recent deal which led to an end to the violence and the agreement to elect Suleiman, and urged him to show strong leadership in ensuring Lebanon's stability and political independence.

¶4. (C) Concerning other steps to be taken by Japan, Tsuji said Tokyo is unlikely to publicly condemn either Syria or Iran, although it agrees these countries are playing very unhelpful roles in destabilizing the situation. Japan believes it is able to exercise more influence over both by

maintaining "normal" relations rather than by calling them out in public. When pressed on whether Japan will take action against Hizbollah by formally designating it as a terrorist organization, either partially or in full, Tsuji replied that Japan would consider doing so only after a majority of the G-8 countries have done so.

SCHIEFFER